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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 001853

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS AND DS/OP/NEA  
LONDON FOR POL - RIEDEL

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL'S MAOISTS ANNOUNCE NEW PROGRAM OF AGITATION

REF: A. (A) KATHMANDU 1832

[¶](#)B. (B) KATHMANDU 1797

[¶](#)C. (C) KATHMANDU 1772

Classified By: POL PMAHONEY. REASON: 1.5 (B,D).

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SUMMARY  
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[¶](#)11. (C) Maoist insurgents, apparently hoping to keep up the momentum from their successful September 16 general strike, have announced a fresh campaign of agitation, including a three-day general strike preceding scheduled national Parliamentary elections in November. The press release, dated September 21, also notes the Maoists' readiness to resume negotiations and enter into a ceasefire if "a positive political solution" to the conflict is found. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has expressed willingness to resume negotiations with the insurgents in principle, but the Maoists' shadowy organization and surreptitious methods leave him unsure of which would-be mediators are authoritative interlocutors. The burden remains on the Maoists to assure the Government of the sincerity of their overtures. The insurgents have released the pilot and passenger abducted after the destruction of their helicopter September 19. The Maoists have also released 200 students in eastern Nepal's Ramechhap District kidnapped from their school the same day.  
End summary.

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MAOISTS PROCLAIM MORE AGITATION,  
THREE-DAY BANDH  
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[¶](#)12. (U) Apparently hoping to capitalize on the relative success of their September 16 general strike, or "bandh" (Ref B), the Maoists have announced a new program of agitation, protests, and "mobilization," culminating in a three-day nationwide bandh November 11-13 that coincides with the beginning of national elections. The September 21 press release, issued on behalf of the Maoists' central committee by Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai and deemed authentic by media outlets, labels the November 13 elections a feudal "conspiracy" and notes the "threat" of royal intervention under Clause 127 of the Constitution (Ref C). To protest against both the "sham" elections and the possibility of royal intervention, the release announced the following five-stage program:

Sept 22 - Oct. 6: Publicity/propaganda  
Oct. 7 - Oct. 27: Regional/local-level programs (not further identified);  
Oct. 27: Strike in Terai (southern plains area along Indian border) and Tharuwan (southwestern districts of Banke, Bardiya, Kailali, and Kanchanpur);  
Oct. 28 - Nov. 10: "Vast public mobilization";  
Nov. 11 - Nov. 13: Nepal Bandh (nationwide general strike).

[¶](#)13. (U) The press release notes the Maoists' earlier calls for "negotiation for an immediate political solution," and asserted they remain open to resuming talks. "We guarantee more flexibility and responsibility and would like to say if a conducive solution is found, then we will be ready for a ceasefire and will withdraw the programs scheduled." If, however, "the feudal tyrannical rulers are obstinate . . we will fight to the death and continue the scheduled programs."

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PM OPEN TO TALKS IN PRINCIPLE,  
BUT WHO TO TALK WITH?  
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[¶](#)14. (C) Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has told the Ambassador he is open to resuming talks with the Maoists, but remains uncertain which of numerous would-be interlocutors can speak authoritatively for the Maoist leadership (Ref C). Having been duped by the Maoists in talks last year, the PM is doubly cautious this time. He fears the allusions to talks may be no more than a ploy to buy time and to postpone national elections he has pledged to hold on time. If the

Maoists genuinely want to negotiate, he reasons, they know where to find him.

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HELO PILOT, PASSENGER SAFE  
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15. (SBU) The pilot and passenger of a helicopter destroyed by Maoist insurgents while on a humanitarian mission in Solukhumbu District September 19 (Ref A) were set free late the following day and have since returned to Kathmandu safely. The pilot, Arun Malla, said his captors were mainly teenage boys about 15-16 years of age who eventually apologized for holding him. They explained they had a mission to destroy all aircraft that could be used in security operations against them and said they meant him no personal harm. (Note: Security forces occasionally use charter aircraft, especially helicopters. The helicopter destroyed in this incident, however, was on a humanitarian mission to airlift a sick man to Kathmandu to attend the funeral of his wife. End note.)

16. (SBU) Malla said he was well treated during his brief captivity, most of which was spent marching through dense jungle. He overnighted with his captors in a Maoist-controlled village, where he met the 27-year-old local commander and was given a meal of potatoes. He was then marched some distance the following day to neighboring Khotang District, where he was able to call his family and employers on his cell phone, advise them of his whereabouts, and ask for a helicopter to pick him and his fellow captive up. The Maoists then returned his wallet, which they had confiscated earlier, and urged him to count the money to be sure that it was all there. Karnali Air sent another helicopter to the location, which landed without incident and picked up the captives.

17. (SBU) The owner of Karnali Air, retired Army officer and former MP Narayan Singh Pun, told us the loss of this helicopter leaves only four in his inventory. (Note: The Embassy relies upon Karnali for all its medevacs from the Annapurna Circuit. Karnali is also one of just a few companies capable of performing medevacs from the Everest Base Camp. End note.) Another aviation source speculated that insurance rates, already climbing because of the insurgency, might be raised yet again, putting the ability of private helo operators to continue air services in question. A September 22 meeting chaired by Civil Aviation Minister Bal Bahadur K.C. (who is from Solukhumbu District and, who, according to local press, had personally requested the hapless special flight), decided that no more helicopter flights will take place to areas where the security environment is inadequate.

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RECRUITMENT RAID IN RAMECHHAP?  
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18. (U) On September 19 Maoists abducted approximately 200 people, including students and teachers from a village in Ramechhap District in the east. The students ranged in age from 12 to 16. According to the Ramechhap Chief District Office (CDO), the captives were taken to Okhaldunga, a neighboring district to the east. All of the captives were later released and returned safely to Ramechhap the same evening. No one at the CDO's Office could say why the captives were taken to Okhaldunga or why they were abducted in the first place, although there was some speculation that the Maoists had may have wanted to recruit the abductees as cadre.

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COMMENT  
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19. (C) Both the destruction of the helicopter and the apparent mass abduction in Ramechhap are further indications of the ever-deteriorating law and order situation in the country, and demonstrate the continued brutal tactics of the Maoists. The helicopter incident could further limit our ability to medevac sick AmCits from remote locations. The Maoists' announcement of their campaign intensifies pre-election pressure on the Government of Nepal (GON), already under fire from other political parties, to re-engage in talks. Until the Maoists can demonstrate the seriousness of this latest offer, however, the PM will be hard pressed to take them up on it. Having let the Maoists know that he is open to talks under the right conditions, the Prime Minister has put the burden back on the insurgents to prove their sincerity.

MALINOWSKI